

Globe Collection 1990–present Installation view at Göppingen Kunsthalle, Göppingen, Germany, 2003

THE DIZZIDENT: LIA PERJOVSCHI

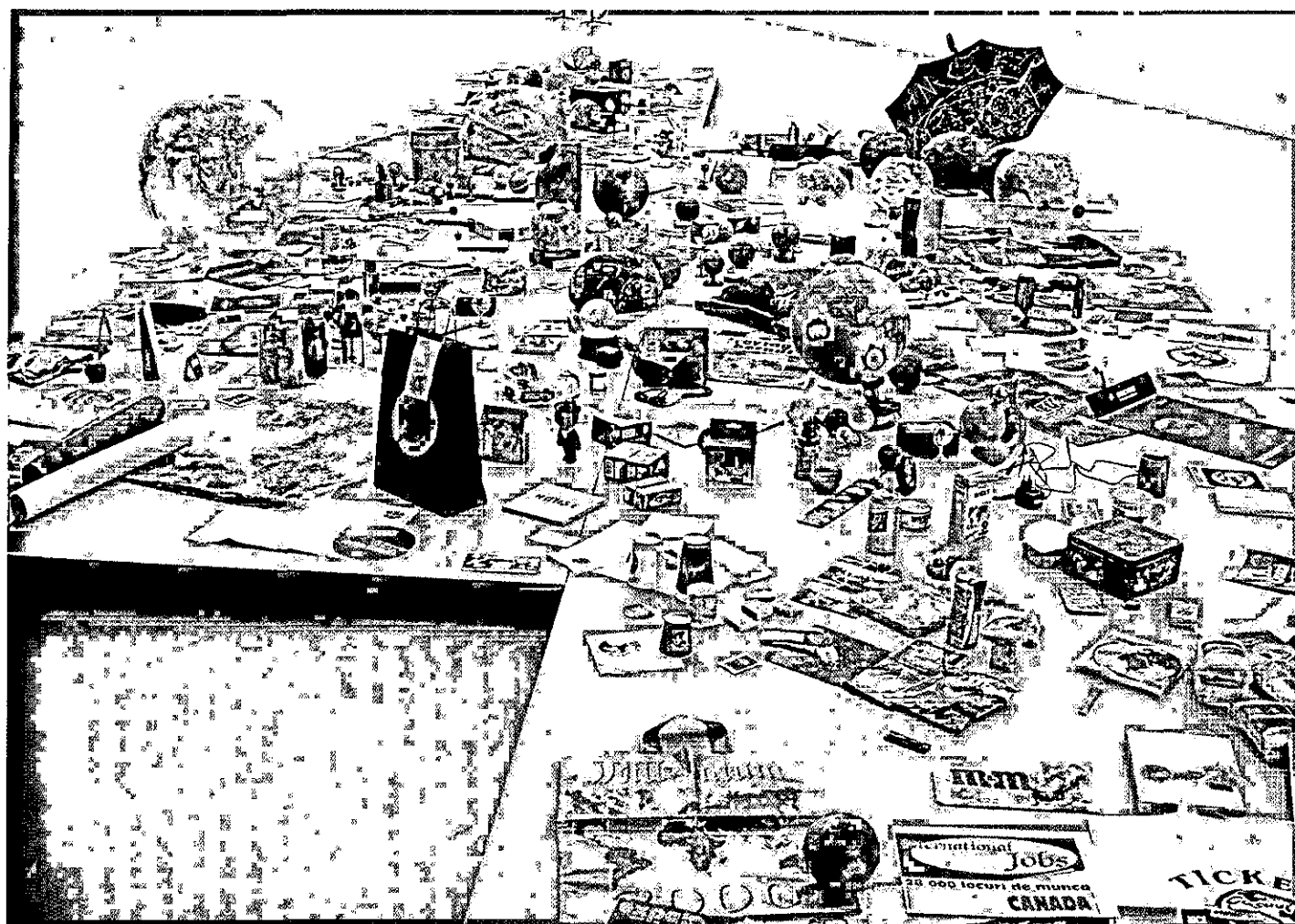
Born in Romania, 1961. Lives and works in Bucharest.

When the Communist government of Romania fell in 1989 and the oppressive secret police Securitate lost control, the country was flooded with information from outside its borders. Lia Perjovschi was a student at the Art Academy Bucharest at the time and was determined to catch up on knowledge that had previously been denied to her. As travel outside Romania became increasingly possible, she crossed Europe gathering catalogues, books, and news clippings that were eventually incorporated into her ongoing project, the *Contemporary Art Archive/Center for Art Analysis (CAA)*. The artist has described the CAA as a “context in motion” that is constantly reinvented by the artists, curators, and critics who interpret art based on the information they find there. To a large extent,

her artistic practice continues to revolve around the activities of the CAA as she publishes newspapers, collects objects, and draws conceptual diagrams that present her own view of how history is formed.

In 1985, Perjovschi and her husband, Dan, started hosting open studios in Bucharest where artists could gather and discuss art criticism, the state of Romanian art, and their place in an international artistic context. She entered the Art Academy in 1987, where she made mostly performance and video art. When she studied the history of these mediums, Perjovschi came to realize that what she was attempting to make had already been done elsewhere in the 1960s, so instead her research became her art. Of the motivation behind the CAA in particular, the artist says, “In order to create something you need to know what was done, and . . . these materials

started to help me understand what I was doing.”¹ In 1990, she began accumulating various collections, such as globes and plastic bags, and started to display them in galleries as comprehensive catalogues on the way we see the world. Most of the objects she has collected were bought in museum gift shops, and thus she uses this material culture to show ways that the artworks in those institutions as well as the museums themselves are commodified and marketed. After a stint teaching contemporary art, theory, and practice at Duke University in 1997, her work took an even more ideological turn, and she published her first in an ongoing series of newspapers, a dictionary of contemporary art terms that includes entries such as “avant-garde,” “critical theory,” and “detective,” a word that relates to the artist’s current practice and that she defines as “to detect, to



Globe Collection 1990–present Installation view at the Generali Foundation, Vienna, 2003

identify, to determine, organized, research, form of surveillance.”²

Perjovschi's installation *Knowledge Museum* (1999–present) is an extension of her interest in archives and lexicons. It is a museum within a museum that is divided into seven departments: body, earth, universe, culture, art, science, and knowledge. Each category has a corresponding “mind map,” an enlargement of the artist's notes and collages on each topic. The museum objects are only loosely grouped, as the sections of the museum are not mutually exclusive and a walk through the installation is intended to parallel a free-floating yet analytical journey through the recesses of one's brain. The items signal a return to modernist inventions such as Marcel Broodthaers' museums and eclectic nineteenth-century libraries such as Aby Warburg's Kulturwissenschaftliche Bibliothek, for

which the scholar obsessively gathered books, images, and cultural artifacts and arranged them as a theoretical history of civilization from pagan antiquity through Renaissance art.

Unlike her forbears, however, Perjovschi does not claim to be searching for a single truth. In fact, she subverts this impulse. In gathering a collection that is all-encompassing, she creates a dizzying context for those who seek to formulate a coherent world view. The only limits put on the collection are the artist's own decisions, experiences, and ultimately arbitrary organization. Her museum-within-a-museum represents, therefore, the current situation for those who yearn for an ever-elusive clarity. She has even taken to calling herself a “dizzident” who strives for a coherent viewpoint but lacks definitive facts from which she can launch an effective critique. By embracing relativism as

a central premise of her practice, she creates art from an unabashedly personal point of view. Nonetheless, works such as *Subjective Art History* (1999–2004) lay out her thinking clearly for anyone to learn from and respond to.³ Through her process, Perjovschi implicitly affirms the possibility of action and change in a bewildering and often confusing world.

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1. Lia Perjovschi, interview with Andréa Adcock and Dale Adcock, in *Lia Perjovschi: Chronology*, Andréa and Dale Adcock, eds. (London: Gallery Yujiro, 2006), 9.

2. Lia Perjovschi, *Detective Draft 2005* (Bucharest: Center for Art Analysis, 2005), 15.

3. See Perjovschi's artist project in this catalogue, 245–280.